1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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SOCIAL CUSTOMS.

000 The Gros Ventre system of terms of relationship has been given in a 605 former publication.[1]

601 Cousins, so far as the relationship was known, were called brothers and sisters, and they called each other's children son or daughter if the cousin [582] was of the same sex as the speaker, or nephew or niece if the cousin was of the opposite sex. Any known relationship was a bar to marriage. The [587] brother of a dead man sometimes married his widow, but this was not always the case.

583 Large amounts of property, especially horses, were given away for wives for the honor of the act, but there was no rule or definite custom covering the quantity of property so given. The horses might be given not only to the father, but to the brothers, uncles, and other relatives of the girl. Sometimes, without having received any gifts and apparently without any previous understanding, a man would give his daughter to a young man, who thereupon would give him horses, or distribute them among his wife's other relatives. Old men practised this custom in order to obtain the aid and services of a young man in caring for their horses and in other ways, and no doubt 585 sometimes also to insure a more certain food-supply. A young man on 431 marrying received a tent with all the proper furniture, usually from his prospective parents-in-law, but sometimes from his own parents, if they were the wealthier.

606 Although a young married man often lived with his father-in-law, the [591] well-known taboo custom between mother-in-law and son-in-law — which forbade their speaking, looking at each other, or being in the same tent — existed among the Gros Ventre. There was, however, no father-in-law taboo. The mother-in-law taboo extended to the son-in-law's brother.

584 If a woman did not wish a man for her lover, she might send him to do a 721 certain act of bravery. If he returned successfully from war, having accomplished the deed, he was then accepted. This custom is said to have led to the death of many young men.

428 At a person's death his property was inherited generally by his relatives. His father and mother, brothers, sisters, and children would receive part. His father and mother received the most. A man often disposed of his property before his death. If he died suddenly, as on being killed in war, his parents divided his property. It was not customary for a man on going to war to divide his property among his relatives in the contingency of his [764] death. Property particularly valued by the dead person was buried with him.

[1] Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVIII, Part I, pp. 9, 180.

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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A wife inherited practically nothing from her husband. If she had been faithful to him and had been of a good disposition, her parents-in-law might give her a certain number of horses or other property. The tent was considered the woman's possession while she lived with her husband; but on his death, even this was no longer her property. If the tent was worth keeping at all, it generally went to the dead man's sister, if she was newly married. A man, on the contrary, inherited his wife's property, though he generally gave back part of it to her relatives.

A woman, on her husband's death, went back to live with her parents, or, if these were dead, with her brother, uncle, or other relative. An old woman, on the death of her husband, generally went to live with her children, most frequently with a daughter.

On the death of a brother, especially a beloved one, or of his father or his son, a man cut his hair and went out naked (with only a buffalo robe) on the prairie to cry from morning until late at night. Women, besides cutting their hair, and cutting themselves (especially on the leg) until they bled, would also go out to cry, naked from the waist up. A sister cut herself for a brother, but a mother mourning for a child underwent the most pain. Of course the mourning was greatest for an only child. In such a case, parents might give away everything in their tent and nearly all their horses, stripping themselves of property so thoroughly as almost to go naked. Some mourners fasted for a number of days. If, while a person was crying on the prairie, one should in joke attempt to scare him, he might kill the disturber. Mourners were the bravest people in war, caring about no danger whatever.

Burial was in trees, on high rocks, or in caves inaccessible to wolves and coyotes. The corpse was wrapped in a burial robe.

A menstruating woman was called niniitixtj. It is said that she did not retire to a separate lodge, or eat separately from her family; but she did not approach a sick patient, because of the evil effect she would have on his condition by her presence. Some women were said to wear a breech-cloth during their menstruation.

In childbirth, women either lay or knelt. They grasped a stick supported in a horizontal position by two upright forked sticks set in the ground. After the umbilical cord had been severed, the end was left on the child. It was thought to fall off on the fourth day. The woman who had cut the umbilical cord received as a gift the knife she had used. A woman who washed a new-born child was given the vessel in which it was washed. The afterbirth was hung in a tree. If it were left lying to be handled, the child would be afflicted with sores. For three or four days after birth, the child was given suck by other women than its mother. This statement apparently refers chiefly to a woman's first child.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would otherwise have few opportunities of obtaining horses.

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable livestock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever personal property might be therein, including food. The close family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep anything of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver than men in disposing of their property before death, and often gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them."

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in dollars—whether it had a fine gold case or not—would not be taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp, being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon the valuable horse before getting very far away."

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations, a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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CHAPTER II

THE FLAT PIPE

Keepership

The Flat Pipe was ordinarily in the custody of an official keeper called nätcä:ta' (nätcä, chief) with his head wife as co-keeper, nä:tciθä (chief woman) and one of their young children as pipe child, nätcəta:niθə'.

In olden times before the coming of the whites according to the tradition as handed down to The Boy and Thick, the Flat Pipe was hereditary in one of the families or bands—which one is unknown. The man and wife chosen, from within the family or band, to be keeper and co-keeper were usually a couple in the prime of life, not an old man married to a young woman or an old woman married to a very young man. A couple in the prime of life were chosen so that, even though they already had children, they could still have more. For it was the tribal law that they should designate out of their children, a boy or girl, born after they had entered upon their keepership to remain with them and to succeed to the keepership should both the keeper and his wife die by accident or sickness. Nearly always they designated a boy, rarely a girl, as the keeper had ordinarily to be a man. The Boy and Thick thought that this system of hereditary keepership came to an end long ago as a result perhaps of the fact that a keeper might have had no children or children died off, or the complete dying out of the family or band in which the Pipe was then hereditary.

In historic times, that is, as far back as definite tribal memory goes, non-hereditary succession has prevailed. It took two forms, elective and volunteer. In the first case, the initiative was taken by others than the prospective keeper; in the second, by the prospective keeper himself. To become an official keeper a man had to be formally inaugurated with a rite which will be described later. In certain emergencies the Pipe was temporarily without

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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Keeper of the Feathered Pipe

The terms for the keeper, co-keeper and Pipe child of the Feathered Pipe were the same as those for the keeper, co-keeper and Pipe child of the Flat Pipe.

Apparently the same high qualifications were required in the keeper of the Feathered as in the keeper of the Flat Pipe. Those specifically recorded by us were: "he had to be some good man and wealthy and noted"; "he had to be a man of intelligence to learn and know the rites and traditions and to maintain the dignity of the ceremonial." In actuality, not all keepers measured up to these lofty standards, as some of our informants emphasized, with ample supporting evidence.

As with the Flat Pipe, succession to the keepership could be either appointive or elective or else volunteer. According to the origin story of the Feathered Pipe, the man to whom the Pipe was first given, appointed, apparently on his sole authority, his uncle as keeper and turned over the Pipe to him.

The recent history of the Feathered Pipe for about the last 100 years can be pieced together from data furnished by Garter Snake, Al Chandler, The Boy, and Thick.

Iron Necklace was keeper somewhere around 1850.[1] He was succeeded by Big Beaver. Bull Lodge succeeded Big Beaver, his sister's husband as keeper. Garter Snake, daughter of Bull Lodge, became Pipe child at the age of six or seven. Bull Lodge had wanted to keep the Pipe until his son, Otter Robe, came of age and then to transfer it to him. But in 1879 or 1880 Bull Lodge was asked for it, asked four times for the Pipe by Sitting High, so he had to give in and transfer it to the latter. Sitting High held the keepership a long time, in fact until his death in 1905. This break with the traditional rule of a maximum 12 years is probably accounted for by the cultural disintegration which set in after the disappearance of the buffalo. As Garter Snake expressed it: "The new life had come in and there was no one to transfer the Pipe to." Little Man, Al Chandler's adoptive father, was Sitting High's son, and Al lived as a boy with Sitting High in the

[1] The Boy in 1948 told a long story about his grandfather, Crow Moccasin, who was keeper of the Feathered Pipe probably around 1830-1840. [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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a woman, one of her adult male kin might be chosen by her to have sexual intercourse with the woman transferee.

To judge from the many anecdotes in circulation about this sex element in transfer payment, anecdotes dating mostly from quite recent decades in the memory of informants, it was a very common topic of gossip and of grapevine communication.

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Transfer of power by gift, appears on the whole to have been much more common than transfer by sale. This accords with the general Gros Ventre pattern of transfer of other kinds of property. The Gros Ventre sold little; he gave much. Property changed hands within the tribe much more by donation than by barter.[16]

Gifts of power were made either to relatives or to friends, and while the giver still had his or her health, though perhaps of advanced age, and not ordinarily at least, on his death bed. A number of cases of offer to transfer by gift doctoring and love power during the possessor's lifetime have been previously given. War power, according to The Boy, "was commonly given, without payment, to a son or brother." "War medicine," according to Al Chandler, "was passed down from generation to generation; Bull Lodge gave his sons (Curly Head and Otter Robe) their war powers. Curly Head was a medicine man but Otter Robe was more of a warrior. Little Man, my adopted father, had some kind of war medicine from his brother, when his brother got killed Little Man took this medicine (a sparrow-hawk and a shirt) from him to keep it, and to use it."[17] While war power might pass down in a family, we obtained no clear instance of such transmission by inheritance proper, in the sense of transfer to take effect only upon the death of the transferrer.

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Our data, all from The Boy, on loan and delegation of power, as distinct from outright transfer, are meager. "An owner of power to be lucky in warfare so as not to be shot could lend this to somebody, and if the owner were going to die he could tell the borrower to keep it." "Sometimes, when a man with medicine power was appealed to come and doctor somebody, he could say to his wife:

[16] For details, see Flannery, 1953, pp. 80-87.

[17] Some of Bull Lodge's war medicines are illustrated in Flannery, 1953, Plate 3; cf. also p. 92.

7: Flannery E-5 (1940, 1945) 1947
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the Grass dance may have seemed appropriate to the Gros Ventres as reminiscent of the feather headdress worn by the participants in the Women's Dance belonging to the series of vowed Sacred Dances. But regardless of the possible symbolism, these four offices, plus the four others allotted to women,—two whip owners and their two assistants,—gave the female sex a fair degree of recognition, and probably reflect the newer economic status of women which came about with the changing concept of inheritance. Formerly women, of course, had a right to their own property, but acquisition thereof was mainly through their own manufacture, such as clothing, or through the relatively rare gift of a horse or so. They did not come in for any valuable property through inheritance and a widow in those days was not even entitled to any of her deceased husband's belongings.

The holding of office in the Grass dance thus offered one of the very few means remaining for acquisition of status by the individual. The frequent transfer of offices meant that there was opportunity for many individuals within each category,—mature men, older warriors, young men, women,—to enjoy such public recognition.

Public display of generosity in giving away property to honor a loved one, which became such a marked feature of the Grass dance in its later phase, carried on and accentuated the method most common in older Gros Ventre culture for the gaining of individual prestige. Formerly there were many opportunities for this kind of ostentatious liberality,—when a pipe or a painted lodge was transferred, when a warrior returned from accomplishing brave deeds, when a person was participating in one of the Sacred Dances, when a person was named, when a child's ears were pierced, and so on. At such times the relatives publicly gave away as much of their property as they possibly could,—not to the recipient of the pipe, the brave warrior, the participant in the Sacred Dance, et al.,—but to someone else in his honor. Everybody would know what was given and by whom; people would make such comments as: "So-and-so is a fine man. He surely must think a lot of his relative—look at all the things he